The

THOREAU SOCIETY

BULLETIN

The Thoreau Society, Inc. is an informal gathering of students and followers of Henry David Thoreau. Frederic T. McGill, Jr., Short Hills, N.J., President; Mrs. Charles MacPherson, Acton, Mass., Vice-President; and Walter Harding, State Univ., Geneseo, N.Y., 14454, Secretary-Treasurer. Annual membership $2.00; life membership, $50.00. Address communications to the secretary.

BULLETIN ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

FALL 1972

VISIT TO THE WACHUSETT. July 1842 by Richard Fuller

[Editor's note: The Boston Public Library has recently acquired a notebook belonging to Richard Fuller, the brother of Margaret Fuller, who was tutored for Harvard College by Thoreau and who accompanied Thoreau on the excursion to Mount Wachusett that Thoreau later wrote up as "A Walk to Wachusett." The notebook contains among other things the beginning of Fuller's account of that walk. Unfortunately it breaks off in the middle to be "continued in Book Second" and the whereabouts of "Book Second" are unknown. But even this fragment I believe will be of interest to Thoreauvians. I am grateful to the staff of the Boston Public Library for their courtesy.]

The first term of my college experience (I entered the class in the middle of the Sophomore year) is now over; and, when I ask myself what I have learned, I find it to be chiefly this,--to know what is to be learned; and my happiest experience that joy awaits me in literature: by literature I do not mean the love of musty books or metaphysical and physical facts; but the deepest thoughts and the wildest speculations of men. Mid all the uncertainties of the world, its wild theories and hard-fought questions, its bigotry, fanaticism, exclusiveness, sectarianism, and the score of baubles which here amuse, and cheat man out of his inheritance;--in such a world it is pleasant for a man to feel that his lot is not in the busy strife; for a man to see his treasures in nature, in poetry (since all these are God); and to be let pass uninjured by the myriad batteries of the world. I have found my nature to be a growing one: I strive to keep it open that it may grow aright; and am, at present, driven about by every wind of doctrine; admiring the good sense of men of the world, the wit of the light hearted, the simplicity and frankness of the untaught, the learning of the learned, logic, eloquence, piety, courage;-- even in the knave I fancy that I see much to be commended, and I revere the good man. In every thing I see truth;--radicalism, conservatism, the church, and the no church: but especially am I now interested with the Ideal class; in their lofty aspirations, the depth and clarity of their uncurbed thoughts; and poetic inspiration, and worship of the beautiful, I find something which is akin to me.

Somewhat such a person as this, on the Monday succeeding vacation, I left Cambridge on foot, intending to journey to the Wachusett, and was to join a friend at Concord. I had become tired of Cambridge, the academic exercises had ceased; and Cambridge was shorn of its charms: for there Minerva has taken possession, and permits no other god or goddess, in particular my favorite, Pan, to approach. So I resolved to go in search of Pan, since he could not come to me. The empire of Minerva is bounded on the east by the kingdom of Mammon, and on the west by the broad realm of Pan: it is said that these three deities are at constant war with each other; and I, (fickle man!) though I ignore the god of gold, pay my addresses to the other two by "fits and starts." I do not know, however, that I, in so doing, act out my own will: they are each pulling me in their direction, and I belong to the one who pulls hardest. Just at this present, Pan had got me entirely into his power: and I, by him prejudiced, looked cynically at the fair Minerva. Men, (humble instruments!) have been trying of late to reconcile these two deities; and it is to be hoped that they may succeed. But, to return, I was in great haste to evacuate the territory of Minerva, and hastened to cross that line of hills in Lexington and West Cambridge, which seems to have risen up at the call of Pan to obstruct the march of the deities to the east of it. A fair bulwark, and often it takes captive those who would pass over; and they find themselves true worshippers of Pan when they have crossed. This fact seems to have stayed the hand of Minerva; she evidently fears much her formidable foe; and is not more willing to trust her alumni within the territory of Mammon and of a fair holy day, is always anxious to see them started for Boston. Indeed she has compromised with Mammon, and has descended from her high eminence in so much as to consent that her worshippers shall also pay homage to Mammon. She has permitted her Cambridge satellites to laud [?] the wages of her colleague, while she has inculcated upon them the necessity of resisting every advance of Pan. With what ills has the compromise between gold and wisdom been fraught! Mammon has proved that his mean cunning is more than a match in intrigue for the lofty wisdom of Minerva; and this goddess in receiving him into her bosom has taken a viper. No sooner had the barriers been removed which covered her annointed from the inroads of gold; no sooner had the worshippers of the two deities mingled in companionship, than Wisdom began to feel the deadly bite of her false friend. Crafty Mammon planted his standard among the lovers of wisdom. Since that hour his golden scales have been used to measure merit; and that in which wisdom has been placed has kicked the beam. And he has broken his treaty; he has insinuated his altar into the breast of wisdom's worshippers. While Minerva has kept her covenant; and too often youth, put off their guard by their praises and the deference which the satellites of Minerva had paid to Mammon, have been entangled by the net, and captivated by the pernicious charms of gold. Too often have they thrown themselves into the arms of love of acquisition; and the treacherous Mammon has never failed to seize

the opportunity to rivet his chains more strongly, and to root out every vestige of love for aught else but himself. But he has done more,--he has done worse; and perhaps in this last act he has overshot himself; though ages have been born and submitted to his yoke till the sufferings and dying groans of their men of genius have led them from the stage, it is to be hoped that they will now throw it off. Mammon has in one hand held up bread, and, showing it to Minerva's subjects, has pointed with the other to his altar and bid them worship him or die. Too often has he required their exclusive worship, and for this has only given a base pittance to prolong their existence. Is this not true? Have not the literary men of Europe in every age, declared that it is true, too, true? And will wisdom submit to this? We trust she will no longer. And, methinks, now she is ready to break the treaty with gold; and would fain make a league with her true neighbor Nature: this we learn from the stand which the arch priests have taken for some time past and it is to be believed that every true lover will enlist under their banner: but wisdom has many half way followers: men who attempt to prove false the great truth, "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon;" but they have only shown its truth: they are men who are driven hither and thither by every influence of interest or aspiration: men who in their philosophy labor hard to reconcile the irreconcilable. Wisdom must struggle long to regain her entire sway over such as these. They resist her attempts with that mixture of Mammon's specious cunning and her own solid wisdom, which has been called sophistry; and which has long been an engine of wonderful efficiency in making the worse appear the better. Let wisdom now, then gird on all her armor to resist this Mammon. Let all her followers serve her with their whole soul, and leave no corner for avarice. Let every one of them slow themselves boldly under her banner, and cry defiance and destruction to her adversaries. Let all of them call to their aid the puissant influence of Nature. Let them see the identity between these two deities, which so long have been thought distinct. Thus shall wisdom soon put all foes under her feet: thus shall she hear from the hearts of her lovers the debasing view which gives to her fair countenance their own deformity. But on a journey of forty four miles, we have only got five.

Soon these hills I crossed, and felt the refreshment which the bird escaped from his cage feels in soaring the infinite field of ether. Higher and higher he goes, but his glad wings, untiring, and his little heart almost bursting from his breast command him to hasten higher. He cuts the broad field with rapidity constantly increasing, and fancies that behind him is the iron grip of imprisonment, and before a joy that will for ever swell his breast. How he flies on half joyous, half afraid! With something of this feeling did I measure miles with a hopeful heart. I did not start from Cambridge till about half past ten on a very hot day; and the sun poured down upon me his warm rays. I never call Nature sultry or sober; her brow is ever even and smooth to my eyes; and, therefore, I will not say that it was over-warm, though the perspiration which started from every pore, did so affirm. Soon the pilgrimage which I paid to Nature was attended with that healthy hunger which must always precede a pleasant repast. And no sooner was this appetite roused than Nature hastened to gratify it, and offered to my eye a sparkling repast of berries. Red ripe and black ripe by the road side, thimble berries and black berries in abundance I ate with vigor, using no forms there. I neither thanked her before nor after the repast, fancying that it would not add to the pleasure which Nature doubtless takes in seeing one turn from the table of art, to eat at her hospitable board. And so I went on alternately eating this ambrosia, and drinking the nectar which every bubbling stream offered. And on this journey to Concord I had no thoughts; it is my way when I am walking with Nature to listen to her with empty mind; and she seldom fails to fill it: then, when my walk is over, it is my pleasure to recall all I may of this legitimate intuition. I fancy I should get little good, if I were [to] attempt to fit to her fair form the habits which I have otherwise gained. I do not think that truths can be so well educed from her by syllogism and reason as by taking what she pleases to give.

I have a rock in a retired place on the road from Cambridge to Concord; where as I sat musing, a year ago, on the probable result of my journey to Concord (I was going to see if I could there fit for College), "corvus ab dextra ilici [?] " foretold success: there I thought what myself might be, and made resolves as to the manner of passing my time at Concord, and, with a prayer, departed. This is a fit place to worship our Father in spirit and in truth: we have not, it is true, the deep voices of the forest uttering truths not to be put in words, but we have the merry music of birds from a neighboring wood, and the surrounding orchard, and then there is a brook at the foot, gliding along among the pebbles and with their aid, making music. Aeolus too, from the forest sends forth his soothing sighs. And a tree above the rock, affords its grateful shade. This little spot invites the traveller to rest; and as he, fatigued, half slumbers, half listens, he finds himself in a dream, and Aeolus whispers something in his ear of no small import: The other voices, too, take to themselves forms, and sing and dance before him; he finds himself an interested person in a fairy tale. He is in an arbor of the fairy Nature; but, when his weariness is gone, the charm is dispelled; and then "in vain he would remember the melody she sung," but he finds himself inclined to meditation. Here I made my regular halt; and the scenes of the coming vacation passed before me; resolved to make the most of them; and praying that such pure influences might ever affect; I got up and hastened on.

Three or four miles before you get to Concord, a wood commences, and continues to shade the road at intervals till you arrive there. Through this wood I passed, and the jays and squirrels beguiled my time till I got there. Before me, at Concord, was the Idealist, Mr. Emerson; a man entirely surrendered to the reign of fancy; and made by her so puissant, that few can have intercourse with him without catching something of the fanciful spirit. He seems to be her representative, the prime minister; and entirely hers, though he finds in the battles of the day, Radicalism and Conservatism, good words [?] to define her, and image her to men. No church, saith he, because morality's bounds impose a limit to fancy. No government, saith he, because fancy spurns all law. I have never seen a man so free from jealousy, he does not fear, but seems to hope, that he may be superseded in the favor of his queen; and any youth, who has one spark of romance, he takes by the hand right cordially, and does his best to kindle that spark into a flame which shall fire his whole being, and convert him, a proselyte to imagination. Such a man

is to be seen and profited by; but such a man is so feared; lest he take captive and dethrone common sense, and destroy our originality and we become but mirrors to reflect some little of his greatness. This is the sum of Concord; but though dazzling his light, he by no means, makes us forget the other luminaries. There is Miss Elizabeth Hoar, who keeps fast in its throne, refinement. And we have Mr. Thoreau, of whom much more anon.

Arrived a[t] Concord, I was most heartily welcomed by Mr. Emerson. And then his transcendental shafts were shot to see if I yet surrendered to Imagination. In fact, I had in college been learning the worth of minor virtues; and even (having there no Nature, and fancy) had thought that they preponderated, when weighed in the scales with imagination: but soon my fickle mind thought them lightest.

Society in Concord is small: the planets of that system, of which Mr. Emerson is the solar light, may be soon named, but must be known:--their light and warmth must be felt, if we would appreciate them. This society is, in effect, the most cultivated city society; but a new coloring has been given it by the sunbeams of Nature, unable to penetrate the walls of the city. We do not find in this circle the tinsel of fashion, but Nature has taught how much fairies are the untrained wild flowers from the pampered inhabitants of the garden, and we have simplicity; though this simplicity is adorned by the arts of polished life. And there we have none of the starched formalities, and we do not consequently violate the rules of society. Each one knows every other; and never fancies that a bow is cold; and should Discord, angry at not being invited among them, throw in her apple, no evil could ensue. Since fashion is not worshipped, she would not injure. Since goodwill reigns, if wounds there were, they would be quickly healed. In Livy we find the speech of Cato, against abolishing the law of restrictions in female attire: his arguments are sound. 'If,' says he, 'the dress be no better than the humblest may wear, emulation will seek some other field than fashion; and perchance the strife will be, which shall best adorn by virtue beauty, or best supply the want of it by the same way. Fashion, it seems to me, is the only tool of Discord in society. Among men the apple which she throws [?] is political pre-eminence; and however sharply the political contest rage, more potent fashion excites a vixen strife among ladies,--which is the fairest--which is yet to be heard above the din of the other.

The morning of the next day arrived, Mr. Thoreau and myself swallowing a good breakfast, and not heeding a threatened storm, with knapsacks filled with a day's provisions and a tent to be alternately carried by each, at about quarter of five, started. We felt all the bracing influences of morning air, and could have descanted long on the wisdom of early-rising, and refuted the arguments of those, who, too fond of the forbidden morning slumber, assert the pre-eminence of a sunset over all other of Nature's beauties.

It may be well to premise that no incidents worthy of note occurred during this pilgrimage to the Wachusett. Other adventures than Nature offered we avoided; and we listen[ed], as we went along, to her harmony, thinking that perchance some note of novel sweetness might be struck, which should charm our heart, and awaken within us some new sentiment. The lover of Nature looks upon her as the mirror wherein he may behold God; he looks upon her as the telescopic glass through which he may better behold that infinite Thought, which is above all and rules all and is in all. And this the lover of Nature, none idolize Nature for her own sake, but she is a hint of the Deity. But this is not understood by the world. The enthusiastic worshipper of Nature is by the cold-hearted loaded with the opprobrious epithets of Pantheist and Infidel. As if, forsooth, worldly men hoped to frighten him by attaching to him the basest names! The most bloated sensualist, the most cowardly religionist and the man of gold, who hopes to buy, by a deference to religion, a passport to heaven, all profess to consider nature a part of divine revelation; not because they see in her fair scenes God's image, but because such is the received opinion. These men profess, too, to believe that spirituality must be obtained, if Heaven is to be secured; their grovelling pursuits sufficiently evince that they are strangers to it, but it is written in language so strong in the Bible that the deaf must hear, though they may not understand. These purblind readers of the Word, these worshippers of God and Satan (God because they fear damnation, Satan, because their heart is with him), these men who have refused to understand the command, 'Thou must worship the Lord, thy God with <u>all</u> thy soul, and him only shalt thou serve,' fear and hate those who with their whole heart enlist under God's banner. They endeavor to drown the voice of prophetic warning such men are sending forth by their calumnious clamors of "Infidel! Pantheist!" Pantheist! what means that? The impeachers say that God is all in all. He whom they call Pantheist believes that it is God's voice which elevates him, when he feels himself by nature called into higher life. 'All things are God," says he, bowing reverently before that presence which his heart would adore fettered [?] , while the world's man passes them unfeelingly, and tacitly says, 'expediency, gods are gods!' The Pantheist believes that all is God; but he does not think crude matter God, as our soul animates our body, so God animates the world; nor does he believe that what comes within the scope of his vision, or of all men's vision is all of God. He limits not the Infinite; he enthusiastically seizes upon and worships all he may discover of him; he hopes thus to see of him more and more. Wherein then does he, scorned Pantheist, differ from him who gives him the name? Is his religion less fervent, is he less zealous in his devotion to what he believes the highest good? Is he profane in thinking that to be God which elevates him? It would seem that the candid answer would be far from unfavorable to him. Were this the balance in which the other were weighed, he would be found wanting. The lover of nature worships with all his heart what he believes to be the highest good. So does every man;--'where your treasure is the[re] your heart shall be also." God is to every man the realization of his idea of perfection or of the highest good. No man's idea of God will do for us, and it would be impiety to say that God has implanted within us a wrong idea of himself. The pilot which every man has to guide him is his idea of good and of right. He then who accuses his neighbor of not worshipping the true God, if that neighbor without selfish aims adores what he believes highest, blasphemes against God. The great test, then, of man, and the only one permitted us, is to judge by a man's life if he truly with his <u>whole</u> soul worships what he professes to believe highest and best. Let us use this only fair test with the (so called) Pantheist and him who gave him the name. But the man of the world shrinks from this ordeal. His heart tells him that his religion is hollow, and

he knows that eagerness of his pursuit of temporal advantages, while he professes the worship of the eternal, cries shame upon the mockery of his religion. 'Tis because he knows this, that [he] attacks so clamorously sincere religion, and endeavors to drown the voice, or bring into bad repute the works of the lover of Nature--those words will pronounce his condemnation.

But while meditation's flow was not impeded, we had got onward, and soon came to a wood that lies between Concord and Stowe. Here we cut us each a cane; and I thought on farmers, as I passed out of the wood, and their green fields smiled upon us. Farmers are not an ideal class, but they are generally free from gross vice. Uncouth are they in appearance, and it would seem that Nature in revenge for the unsharing way in which they have lopped her fair proportions, often destroying the beauty of her features, though giving her in return a more florid complection, in revenge for this, nature has given them ugly forms and coarse voices,--her only method of retaliation, and unsatisfactory enough; for the farmer looks not at the mirror, and if dame Nature afford him a brook for the purpose, he digs a channel for it, and makes his meadow greener; thus by no means displeased with the trick Nature plays him, and well satisfied with the fruit she yields him, he plods on, and seizes his hoe with new vigor each day. And yet, though you will not find a farmer ideal, you are not sorry to see him away in the field at labor, and, in fact, he makes no contemptible addition to the scenery.

Soon we arrived at Stow. This town was once my habitation. Seven years ago last autumn, my brother, Eugene, kept the academy; I was then about ten years of age; and my life, during three months' residence there, was a delightful dream. Too old not to observe what passed, too young to know what sorrow oppressed the world, and ignorant of the meaning men derived from nature and the world, all the scenes of that short time were like the evanescent figures that flit before the magic lantern. The chief import of things about me was happiness. The beautiful, clear mornings of September, the last song of the departing birds, the "cock's shrill clarion", Nature, itself, luxuriant though fading all bade me enjoy. True there were times of sorrow, but sorrow that I loved to remember, and which gave a more meaningful appearance to the aspect of Nature, that sort of infant sorrow which rather preserves the identity, and deepens the romance of the soul. My grief, and my only grief was homesickness: and that was only strong when my father and mother had visited and left me. I used to ride with them as far as they would let me walk back; and then watch the departing chaise wistfully, as my father and mother turned back and smiled. And then, when I would see them no more, I would turn homeward, and walk along looking about me in sad meditation, things about me seemed to sympathise with me, and I was grateful for it, and loved them with new affection when the blithsome hours came back. I used to go back to where the chaise had been standing, and in the most convenient place, put some stones upon the track to mark it., and preserve it uneffaced. And the clear mornings when the ground was covered with hoar frost, and the jocund who were all kind to me, and my brother's affectionate treatment, all united to make upon my mind an impression which eight years have not dimmed. Oh when are the happy years of life? Is it in budding youth, when the eye has grown callous to childish pleasures, when the dreadful weight of sin and accountability is vitiating the young mind on engendering perpetual strife? Is it mature manhood, when the brow furrowed by care marks many sorrows past and many anticipated. Is it grey, venerable, solemn old age, when the soul feels the dread reality of things, and looks calmly, if you please, but fearfully in the dread eternity whither it is about to be launched? Nay, if you will, that the presence of deep thought, and its first joyous throes in the heat of youth more than compensate for the labor he bears. Say that careful manhood has many works well done in re- _____.

Visit to Wachusett continued in Book Second.

REPORT OF THE WALKING SOCIETY -- WALDEN POND

by Mary Fenn

A visit to Walden Pond is both a pleasure and a disappointment. It is a disappointment because we think of the pond as being far off in the country and yet a trailer camp is nearby and in summer the sandy shore at the town end is packed with swimmers. But once away from the crowd, the path circling the shore, once made by the aborigine feet, is lovely, and the wooded hills surrounding the clear water are much as they were in Thoreau's day. Thoreau's cove with its sand bar is a secluded and picturesque spot, and yet the many foottrails betray a great number of visitors. I have taken many people to the site of Thoreau's house, sometimes reading short excerpts from Walden in which Thoreau describes the place - and always there is a hush which steals over the group, for this is indeed sacred ground.

Above the hut site is the famous bean field, its diminsions clearly marked by the rows of stumps, for Thoreau, after he left the pond, planted the field to evergreens which grew to tall trees but were burned in one of the many fires in Walden woods set by sparks from the "steam cars". Not far from the bean field is a huge glacial sink hole filled with scrubby oaks and bushes.

There is another cove beyond Thoreau's, which nestles up to the railroad embankment. Although it is not as deep, it is very scenic. In fact Hawthorne considered it the most beautiful cove at Walden. At the turn of the century an amusement park was located here, with throngs coming out from Boston on the train to spend the day. The granite posts of some of the buildings are still to be seen, and the stone work of a wooden bridge over the tracks. Beyond, one still finds traces of the cinder track once used for bicycle races.

The upper shore of the lake is narrow because of the railroad embankment - but here in season one generally finds a few fishermen. The shore opposite Thoreau's cove is somewhat steeper than the west side, and if we cross on the height of land we look down into Heywood's Meadow. This is a quaking bog with a stream flowing through it which goes down through the woods to empty at last into Fair Haven Bay. Heywood's Meadow is a secluded spot: almost never have I met anyone in there, yet it is so beautiful, covered in season with wild cranberries, cotton grass, rose pogonia and sundews. In spring the wild rhodora blooms there and in summer the water lilies, while the shores are bordered by cattails and ferns. A spring, known as Emerson's Spring, oozes out from under the steep hillside, which Alcott visited with Emerson, climbing down what he called a hatchet path.

On the south side of the pond is the highest land

bordering the pond and here is what is still known as Emerson's Cliff. The philosopher planned to build a studio. He took Thoreau there to survey it, and Alcott to plan the proposed building but nothing ever came of the project.

So we come full circle to the lower end of Walden, where the sandy beach flattens out. Here a streak of clay lay in the soil, and here a potter once turned his wheel and fired his pots.

Although we have returned to the populated bathing beach, and climbed the steep hillside to the parking lot and the state highway, we have still had for a little time a glimpse of the quiet beauty of Walden Pond as it was in Henry David Thoreau's day.

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THOREAU: SOME NEGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

by Ray Gagnon

(Editor's note: Wishing to get a good discussion going at the forum at the annual meeting, I asked Ray Gagnon to prepare a short paper on what he thought to be Thoreau's most serious flaws. At the request of many of the people there, I am delighted to present that paper herewith. Incidentally, I would appreciate suggestions for topics for future annual meetings.)

The following might be termed, I suppose, a dissenting view on Thoreau. It is a personal view, in any case--in many ways the best kind, I think. Lest it be cited against me, I would add that the quote from Odell Shepard was stumbled upon, and merely happened to support, in part, the views expressed. I hasten to explain this because it seems to me that readers at large do not consult the critics, and, consequently, if a writer such as Thoreau is to effect change in the reading population as a whole, he must evoke at least a favorable response from the average reader without the critics' aid or hindrance. This then is my individual reaction to Thoreau, as an ordinary reader of his.

Shepard's quote affords us a good beginning. It pertains to the difference in writing styles between Emerson and Thoreau:

> There are many differences between the two styles of course,--differences due to the immensely

> wider sweep of Emerson's mind, to its superior poise and calm, and to his lack of that spiritual vigor which he so much admired in his friend. Thoreau could not have achieved the serene elevation of the opening paragraphs in Emerson's second Nature essay any more than he could have flashed the torch of imagination into the most obscure and secret caves of thought, as Emerson does in the earlier one.[1]

The quote is important for a few key phrases, it seems to me, rather than for our agreement or disagreement with it as a whole, phrases such as "the immensely wider sweep of Emerson's mind," "poise and calm" and "serene elevation." My concern here is not to pit Emerson and Thoreau against each other in petty competition, but only, by referring at times to Emerson, to clarify my case against Thoreau. I would like to consider Thoreau in the light of these key phrases and, more importantly, what I will call the "transcendental ideal." For our purposes, a working, basic "ideal" for the literary philosophy of Transcendentalism is easily formulated. The transcendentalist believed that the transcendent, not the transcient, was the ultimate reality, that the universals, not the particulars, were most important. If "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in"[2] it is the "sandy bottom" which is "shallow," the "thin current" which "slides away," but "eternity," something "immensely wide," something "poised," something "calm," something "serene" and "elevated" which "remains." What then shall we cling to, work for? In Thoreau's own words, "Let us settle ourselves, and work and wedge our feet downward [we could also say upward or inward] through the mud and slush of opinion, and . . . delusion, and appearance, . . . till we come to a hard bottom and rocks in place, which we can call reality, and say, This is, and no mistake . . ." (pp. 97f). Thoreau's constant complaint is, of course, that is is rarely done on a large scale. Rather, "Shams and delusions are esteemed for soundest truths, while reality is fabulous" (p. 95). But in his own words again: "When we are unhurried and wise, [might we say "poised and calm"? "serene" and "elevated"?] we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence,--that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of reality" (pp. 95f).

Judged on his own terms, it is my feeling that Thoreau falls considerably short of this ideal. He was far less able, it seems, to hold to his transcendental faith, yes, to practice what he himself preached to others than was Emerson, say. He is at times in his writings shallow, insecure, immature, and, to use one of his own words, petty.

In Walden, after telling us that the building of his Walden house began with the borrowing of an axe, he must apologize that "It is difficult to begin without borrowing . . . .," and hasten to add that although he had to borrow the axe,". . . . I returned it sharper than I received it" (pp. 40F). When he informs us of the assistance he received from acquaintances in setting up the frame of his house, he must quickly interject that he accepted assistance "rather to improve so good an occasion for neighborliness than from any necessity. . ." (p. p. 45). Once again, later in the same chapter when he tells us of his preparation of the beanfield for cultivation, he says: "I was obliged to hire a team and a man for the ploughing . . . . ," and adds ". . .though I held the plow myself" (p. 55) I suppose to compensate for this glaring offense against individualism. These passages, like others which could be cited, have the ring of insecurity about them. There is something unsolid here, and it is quite unnecessary. For we know that a man who borrows an axe or hires a plow can still be a self-reliant man. But does Thoreau?

And then there is that night spent in jail. Emerson considered it "mean, skulking and in bad taste." While it was certainly not serenely elevated, I find the act itself difficult to judge. Not so the essay, however. Here again there seems to be a falling short of the transcendental ideal. Here again we have a tone which drags the essay down to the particulars and mars its greatness. We have the bravado of a man who is not satisfied with stating the noble reasons for going to jail, but must rather unconvincingly glory in even its physical surroundings as somewhat of a fine new place from which to view the world. It would appear at times that Thoreau, the all-powerful, simply cannot be affected by any other power. Then too, on his being released from jail he tells us, in a manner reminiscent of the childish "sticks-and-stones-will-break-my-bones" jingle, that he proceeded to "a huckleberry field, . . . two miles off, and then the State was nowhere to be seen."[3]

The point is, that meeting with such passages so concerned with self-justification, a reader is inclined to wonder if Thoreau is attempting to justify the truth or if he has lost sight of this more transcendent goal in his attempts to justify himself. When one reads Emerson, he is impressed, I think, with the absence of the individual personality, with the grandness, the universality, the transcendentalism, in this sense, of the thoughts expressed. He is hearing a defender of the truth; Thoreau, on the other hand, seems sometimes to get lost in defending himself.

But perhaps most disappointing to me as an admirer of Thoreau is the treatment he gives to the John Brown controversy. I am not speaking here of the merits, pro or con, of John Brown's case; I am concentrating on the kind of reaction which this controversy evoked from Henry Thoreau. Unfortunately, it seems to me, there is very little in an essay such as "A Plea for Captain John Brown" which can be called "unhurried and wise." Yet this essay was written by the same man who had said: "If we read of one man robbed, or murdered, . . . or one house burned, . . . or one steamboat blown up, . . . --we need never read of another. One is enough. If you are acquainted with the principle, what do you care for a myriad instances and applications?" (Walden, p. 94). And keep in mind the ranting of "A Plea" as you read the words of Krishna from the Bhagavad-Gita, perhaps Thoreau's favorite book of scripture. The words are said to Arjuna in answer to his reluctance to enter a battle and his concern over the results of war. Says Krishna: "The truly wise mourn neither for the living nor for the dead." And again: "A serene spirit accepts pleasure and pain with an even mind, and is unmoved by either. He alone is worthy of immortality."[4] Certainly a difficult goal, a difficult ideal to attain to for any human being. And I think equally certainly, a goal which Thoreau fell short of. A friend of his, however, seems to have been more successful, although the struggle was not an easy one. Says Emerson in his Journal:

> I waked at night, and bemoaned myself, because I had not thrown myself into this deplorable question of Slavery, which seems to want nothing so much as a few assured voices. But then, in hours of sanity, I recover myself,

and say, "God must govern his own world, and knows his way out of the pit, without my desertion of my post, which has none to guard it but me. I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes, to wit, imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the brain of man,-- . . . which, important to the republic of Man, have no watchman, or lover, or defender, but I.[5]

Thoreau, it seems, loses sight of the transcendental too often. While he can distinguish between the "thin current" which "slides away" and the "eternity which remains," he too often seems to be caught up in the current. He is not, in the final analysis, a wise man--at least not when he is outside of his protective Nature and within society. He is too seldom "unhurried and wise."

In one of his most memorable passages, he wrote: "Let us spend one day as deliberately as Nature, and not be thrown off the track by every nutshell and mosquito's wing that falls on the rails" (Walden, p. 97). Again and again as I read Thoreau, I find myself wishing he had been able to live those words more closely.

NOTES

[1]Odell Shepard, "Introduction" to Henry D. Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. xxvii.

[2]J. Lyndon Shanley, ed., Walden, The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 98. All quotes from Walden are from this edition.

[3]Henry David Thoreau, Walden and Civil Disobedience: The Variorum Editions, ed. Walter Harding (New York: Washington Square Press, 1968), p. 359.

[4]The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood (New York: Mentor, 1944), p. 36.

[5]Edward Waldo Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes, eds., Journals of Ralph Waldo Emerson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909-14), VIII, 316.

SOME FURTHER NOTES ON HAWTHORNE AND THOREAU

by Raymona Hull

[Editor's Note: These notes supplement the material to be found in Edward C. Peple, Jr.'s "Hawthorne on Thoreau" in Bulletin 119.]

1. There were two letters in 1854 to Milnes in response to the latter's questions about the books Hawthorne had sent to him. On Nov. 13 Hawthorne wrote:

> Walden and Concord River are by a very remarkable man; but I hardly hope you will read his books, unless for the observation of nature contained in them which is wonderfully accurate. I sometimes fancy it a characteristic of American books, that it generally requires an effort to read them; there is hardly ever one that carries the reader away with it, and few that a man of weak resolution can get to the end of. Please not to quote this as my opinion...[copy, in answer to Milnes' letter of Nov. 13, from Norman Holmes Pearson's collection, Yale University]

2. The passage in a letter to Milnes, quoted by Mr. Peple, first column, page 2 (footnote 6 as coming from Mather's book) is the second letter to Milnes, dated Nov. 18, 1854. Mr. Peple omits the last portion on Thoreau:

> I wish anything could be done to make his books known to the English public; for certainly they deserve it, being the work of a true man and full of true thought. You must not think that he is a particular friend of mine. I do not speak with quite this freedom of my friends. We have never been intimate, though my home is near his residence [Concord]. [copy also from the Pearson collection]

3. The reference in which Milnes questions about Whitman and Leaves of Grass is to a letter written from London on June 30, 1856 [collection of W.H.T. Howe; copy also in the Pearson collection] I do not have the original of the answer written by Hawthorne and quoted from Rose H. Lathrop, but it can be dated after June 30, 1856.

4. On April 11, (not, as Mr. Peple rightly points out, in February; in 1963 I was quoting Caroline Ticknor, not working from original letters) Hawthorne asked Ticknor to send the Thoreau books for Jerrold and Mackay. Hawthorne wrote to Mackay about these books on June 26, 1856:

> If you will look into them, I feel quite sure that you will find them full of new and peculiar thought, and will see the characteristics of a man who has lived an individual life, based upon his own ideas. At any rate, let them be memorials to Mr. Jerrold and you, of the very great pleasure that I enjoyed that evening, in your company. [original letter in Middlebury College]

5. The Mackay account is, I feel, an unfortunate publication. Mr. Peple's quotation omits Mackay's remarks on Hawthorne's clumsy attempts at humor and the comment made to him later by Jerrold, "But he means well as all clumsy people do." [Forty Years' Recollections...p.280] The excerpt is, therefore, less revealing of Mackay's pettiness. Randall Stewart, in the English Notebooks, p. 646, points out that Mackay may have been "piqued by Hawthorne's preference for Jerrold." I can only assume from the date of Mackay's volume that after twenty years his recollections of the entire relationship between him and Hawthorne are as inept as the latter's use of the word acrid.

6. When Mackay left for his trip to the U.S. in 1857, Hawthorne wrote not one, but three letters of introduction. In addition to the letter to Emerson (footnote 11 in Mr. Peple's article), Hawthorne also wrote to Evert Duyckinck and to Franklin Pierce. In Through the Long Day, II, 157-8, published ten years after the Recollections, Mackay tells the story of how cordially he was received in the U.S. by Pierce (and later the two were snubbed at the club because of Pierce's unpopularity). He quotes Pierce as being surprised that a man "usually so cold, reticent, unenthusiastic, and undemonstrative as Mr. Hawthorne should have written such warm and cordial terms of anybody as he had done of me, and asked me what I had done or said that had procured me such high favour?" [p. 158]

Is it likely that Pierce, one of Hawthorne's oldest friends, would have described him in these words? Mackay, in other words, is certainly a questionable, and may be an unreliable, source of information.

7. Regardless of personal feelings about any author, English or American, Hawthorne was keen in his literary judgments. He was capable of both severe criticism and admiration at the same time. Readers often take seriously what may be attempts at humor. That is only part of Hawthorne's ambiguities. As regards Thoreau, Hawthorne often admitted that he was

not enthusiastic about the man personally; but Hawthorne did admire and appreciate the quality of Thoreau's writing.

NOTES AND QUERIES

We are indebted to the following for information used in this bulletin: T.Blanding,L.Beaulieu,G.Boudreau,M.Campbell,J.Donovan,R.Dickens,R.Epler,F.Flack, R.Fleck,G.Hasenauer,D.Holroyd,A.Jensen;D.Kamen-Kaye, J.Lawrence,J.Plumb,R.Schaedle,E.Schofield,J.Shanley, A.Small,H.Simpson,H.VanFleet,J.Vickers, and P. Williams. Please keep the secretary informed of items he has missed and new ones as they occur.

We are grateful to Mr. August B. Black of Morris, Illinois, who has donated to the society the cost of printing this bulletin:

John Shorter, 4 West View Crescent, Geneseo, N.Y. 14454 has for sale the Walden Edition of of Thoreau with a half-morroco binding. Address inquiries to him directly.

Stephen Suber, a student at Principia College in Elsah, Ill., has composed a musical setting for Thoreau's poem "Upon the Bank at Early Dawn" that was performed there on May 19, 1972.

The Thoreau Society has just prepared a special map for locating the site of Thoreau's cabin at Walden for tourists visiting Concord, Copies may be obtained from your secretary or the Concord Guide Booth.

The Lawrence and Lee play THE NIGHT THOREAU SPENT IN JAIL is being translated into Russian, Dutch, German, French, and Bangladesh And there are plans to make a movie of it next spring.

John LaMontaine was commissioned by Mrs. Catherine Shouse to compose a piece for the dedication of the organ she recently gave to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D. C. He chose to set passages from Thoreau's writings to music for full orchestra, organ, and bass soloist. Its first performance,on Oct. 10, brought rave reviews from the critics.

Edwin Way Teale informs us that Thoreau was the first naturalist to record the so-called "rodent run" of the ovenbird and that Thoreau was in error when in WALDEN he blamed the mole for nibbling his potatoes. The mole is completely carniverous. The meadow mouse was probably the guilty nibbler.

Elliott Allison informs us that in all editions of Thoreau's WEEK, Ellery Channing's "Boat Song" is misquoted with "frame" for "form" in the second line.

In reply to the query in Bulletin 115, John Pontin writes that George Borrow referred to Thoreau as "the Yankee Hermit" in a conversation with Theodore Watts-Dunton.

In reply to the question as to what Thoreau meant when he said, "The river is smooth to a cobweb," Fuzzy Fenn notes that in his journal for Sept. 26, 1859 (XII, 356) he says, "Observed the spiders at work at the head of Willow Bay. Their fine lines are extended from one flag or bur-reed to another, even six or eight feet, perfectly parallel with the surface of the water and only a few inches above it ...They work thus in calm and fine weather when the water is smooth."

The award-winning film "The Pentagon Papers and American Democracy" was filmed in part at Walden Pond.

The Datsun Motor Car Co. is currently giving away a large Ansel Adams poster with a Thoreau quotation on it.

Joseph Basile has recently completed a doctoral dissertation at Louisiana State on "Man and Machine in Thoreau."

A new housing development on Moosehead Lake in Maine advertises "Naturally Thoreau loved it." I'm glad they put it in the past tense.

Quality Industries of Philadelphia 19138, put out a cloth bookmark with the different drummer quotation.

Add Milwaukee, Wisc. to the growing list of communities that have named one of their public schools after Thoreau.

MORE DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS ON THOREAU.

With the permission of the University of Microfilms of Ann Arbor, Mich., we continue printing herewith reproductions of abstracts of dissertations on Thoreau. The full dissertations are available from University Microfilms at the prices given at the ends of the abstracts:

THOREAU'S POETIC COSMOS AND ITS RELATION TO TRADITION: A STUDY OF HIS READING AND HIS WRITINGS, 1837-1854.

(Order No. 65-10,455)

John Lawrence Magnus, Jr., Ph.D.
The Johns Hopkins University, 1965

Thoreau's self-conception was remarkable. It attracted unusual attention in his lifetime even in a literary community that favored strong individualism as an ideal, and it continues to attract attention to his work. Throughout his writings, he seems frequently to rely on references and allusions to literary tradition to support his own viewpoint when he knows it most differs from that of his community. As he was one of the most erudite of American literary authors, learned not only in the central texts but in the marginalia of world literature, he developed the comforting ability to invoke precisely the appropriate tradition to justify his own opinion--whatever it might be. In a single sentence he could call on Caesar, Swedenborg, and Darwin to confirm his view against that of a townsman, and change the names easily if he later changed his view. This practice was never merely specious, however, because his view was remarkably consistent, and truly responded to the traditions he appropriated.

He responded with equal vigor to the insights of his own age, which he found to be rich in new philosophy, new poetry, and new science. As has been remarked--by Emerson among his acquaintances and by Georges Poulet among contemporary critics--Thoreau wished more than other men to live fully in the present moment. But more than that he wished to make all time present. His single success in this desire was to accommodate the literary tradition he had so ardently absorbed to the influx of new ideas in Concord. His real ability was to find new insights in the thinking of his own age with which to support traditional views, and in turn to give the weight of this tradition to new ideas that otherwise might seem transient and insubstantial.

This study emphasizes the four subjects upon which Thoreau most frequently brings his reading to bear in expressing his own view: the selfhood of the poet, the structure of space and time, his relation to living things in nature, and the discomfiting demands of society. His philosophical reading of the summer and early autumn of 1840 receives special attention, as it seems to have been during this period that he expanded his limited self-conception into a real world-view. More attention is also given to his interest in contemporary writers and their immediate predecessors than in any previous study of his reading. Thoreau's response to Goethe, Wordsworth, Carlyle and Emerson figures prominently, but Emerson is contrasted to Thoreau in the greatest detail. Thoreau's response to authors of lesser reputation is often less direct, but occasionally more interesting; for instance, Thoreau seems to have been fascinated by the incipient scientific relativism of such figures as J. B. Stallo and Charles Darwin (whose reputation was yet to be established). Sir Thomas Browne is important as one whose philosophy, scientific education, and poetic prose combined more than any other writer Thoreau's own interests. Finally, the writings of his Concord neighbors and the remarkable periodical literature of his day are kept in constant view, but subordinated to the works in which he was most explicitly interested.

Microfilm $3.15; Xerography $11.05. 241 pages.